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Soviet Announces Khrushchev Death In Cool Language

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MOSCOW, Monday, Sept. 13—Soviet authorities this morning broke their silence and announced "with sorrow" the death on Saturday of former Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev, who will be buried later today without full state honors.

A brief obituary in Pravda, the Communist party paper, avoided any praise of the man who had dominated Soviet political life for 11 years before he was ousted by the current Kremlin leaders seven years ago and was relegated to obscurity in his own country.

The announcement, made public by Tass, the Soviet press agency, a few hours before Pravda was to be distributed, said:

"The Central Committee of

Continued on Page 3, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 4

the Soviet Communist party and the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. announce with sorrow that on Sept. 11, 1971, after a severe and long illness, the former First Secretary of the Central Committee and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, special pensioner Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, died in his 78th year."

It was signed by the Central Committee of the party and the Council of Ministers, and not by any of his former Kremlin colleagues, such as Leonid I. Brezhnev, Aleksei N. Kosygin, or Nikolai V. Podgorny, personally, as official obituaries usually are listed.

Nor was the time of his funeral or any information about it provided to the Soviet people, as are funerals accorded high leaders who are given full state honors. Mr. Khrushchev will be buried in the Novodevichye Monastery Cemetery in Moscow, a burial place for many Russian notables, but a notch below the Kremlin wall where all other top party leaders have been interred.

Moreover, reflecting the refusal of the Kremlin leaders to end Mr. Khrushchev's political disgrace, there will be no public funeral ceremonies. His family has told Western correspondents that farewell remarks will be made at the Kremlin Hospital in the Kuntsevo section of Miscow, where he died of a heart attack around noon on Saturday.

The Pravada announcement which will probably be read over the radio this morning, was the first official word to the Soviet people about the death of the colorful Mr. Khrushchev, who achieved significant popularity for his anti-Stalin campaign and his promises of peace and prosperity, but who was scorned by many in his last years as leader for inefficient economic policies and crude public behavior.

Western newsmen had learned of his death soon, and foreign radio stations have broadcast the news to the Soviet without let-up for the past two days. But this did not push the authorities into making an early announcement.

Wording Was Sensitive

Western diplomats believed that the exact wording of the obituary was such a sensitive task that it probably required Politburo approval. And since the top leaders were scattered in different country and city houses over the weekend, it probably took time t get a consensus on how to treat the news.

Although many Russians are know to listen to foreign broadcasts, interviews on the Moscow streets yesterday produced virtually no one who knew of Mr. Khrushchev's death. And when informed about it, people from all walks of life and all age groups, seemed to share a mutual indifference.

"He was an old man," one art student said. "He did some good things. But he made many mistakes.

"I am not interested in poli-

tics. What can I say?" a long-haired youth said.

"Some people will say that he was stupid," a woman ice-cream vendor said. "Some will say he was a good man. But he was retired so what does it matter."

Yesterday was a lazy Indian summer Sunday, one of the last before the wintry winds move into the capital, and thousands of Muscovites were in parks and at their country cottages for a last bit of warmth. One of the favorite places was the Novodevichye Cemetery, where Mr. Khrushchev is scheduled to be buried.

But there, as in other parts of town, no one was talking about Mr. Khrushchev. At the far end of the new section of the cemetery, a young workman was digging a grave next to those of people unknown abroad.

He was asked if the grave was for Mr. Khrushchev? He exclaimed. "How should I know. I dig 30 graves a day. No one tells me who they are for."

In Novodevichye are the graves of such famous Russian writers as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Aleksei Tolstoy, Nikolai Ostrovsky, and of public figures as former Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, and physicist Igor Tamm.

The families of Kremlin leaders are also here—Nadezhda Alliluyeva, wife of Stalin, as well as the wife of Premier Kosygin.

Tradition Is Broken

But the refusal of authorities to allow Mr. Khrushchev to have a Red Square funeral ceremony with burial in the Kremlin wall breaks with a time-honored tradition. Just last December, Nikolai M. Shvernik, who was a much less important figure than Mr. Khrushchev, received full honors and his ashes were placed in the Kremlin wall. Many military men, some of whose abilities were questionable, have also been honored in the Kremlin wall.

It is assumed in diplomatic circles here that Mr. Brezhnev, the party General Secretary, who replaced Mr. Khrushchev as the country's top figure, decided that it would be politically embarrassing for the Kremlin to haonor a man who is now described in Soviet reference works as a man given to "hare-brained schemes," and who acted in a "subjective" manner, whose plans for reorganization of the party were poorly designed, and who failed to consult with the other members of the top leadership.

Ironically, the man whom Mr. Khrushchev sought to discredit — Stalin — is buried next to the Kremlin wall, and only last year a bust was installed in his honor. Stalin died in 1953 while in office, and his death was a time of national grief for the majority of Russians who did not know or refused to believe that he was responsible for the mass arrests and backward state of the Soviet economy.

The Pravda obituary differed from the usual effusive eulogies that are printed in honor of leading Soviet figures. The reference to "special pensioner" meant that upon his forced retirement he was awarded a private pension and did not have to receive only the social security benefit awarded on the basis of salary and seniority.

The cool tone of the notice was sure to be interpreted by both party propagandists and by ordinary Russians as a signal that even in his death there would be no change in the official evaluation of Mr. Khrushchev, which, since his ouster has been quite negative.

Associated Press

PARISIANS HEAR OF KHRUSHCHEV'S DEATH: Frenchmen, taking part in a festival sponsored by a Communist newspaper, listening to radio in front of the Soviet booth.

Moscow Is Cool on Khrushchev Death